

# The Rages Rag

Newsletter of Rail Action Group, East of Scotland

Issue No. 10 - July 2001

## RAGES is branching out Haddington a possibility for £9m

RAGES has asked the Haddington Community Council to help it raise the re-opening of Haddington station in the public domain. A dossier of information detailing the various places supporting the re-opening was sent to the Council.

- Extracts from the East Lothian Rail Study of 1999
- RAGES response to the Scottish Executive's "Strategic Priorities for Scotland's Passenger Railway" document.
- East Lothian Council's aspirations and as such raised by ELC at the recent Rail Passenger Committee for Scotland's quarterly meeting at North Berwick.
- Railtrack's document "Network Management Statement" also contains ELC's aspiration of the re-opening of the Haddington branch.
- South East Scotland Transport Partnership (SESTRAN) document "Towards a Rail Strategy"

Summarising from the East Lothian Rail Study regarding the Haddington case:

- An hourly all-day stopping service from Haddington to Edinburgh assumed to be operated by ScotRail.
- Given a viability factor of 1.17, a value greater than 1 indicating the service should be viable from the operator's viewpoint.
- Given a fundability factor of 0.39, a value of less than 1 suggesting that sources of funding other than public funding may be required.
- Suggested heavy-rail station with car park between Roodlands Hospital and the existing railway track-bed, with access from Hospital Road. The original site is

"unreachable" due to factory units having been built over the track bed.

- Subway under the Haddington by-pass would need to be re-aligned. (Ed: short-sighted planning?)
- Suggested average single fare would be £1.35 (1999 prices)
- Suggested light-rail option would terminate in the High Street.
- It was not recommended because, although just viable, "it would trigger the need for additional track capacity and thus greatly worsen its fundability".
- Re-evaluate in the "long term" - 2005 - 2010.

Local councillor Charles Ingle, vice-convenor of East Lothian's Environmental and Technical Services Committee and their transportation spokesman, said that the transport link group SESTRAN had looked into the possibility of improving the rail network in East Lothian.

He told the Courier recently, "It would cost around £9m, which is not a vast sum of money by any stretch of the imagination. It is not an inconceivable idea and I personally think that Haddington really needs a railway line."

The Courier editorial recently said that "Growing towns need rail links". "There is little doubt that such a development would have to take place outside the town boundary, probably to the west and most likely directly across the A1 from land earmarked by Lothian Regional Council for industrial development." (Ed: in the reign of LRC)

The Community Council has decided to arrange a meeting on the subject for September, to be attended by council representatives and members of RAGES. It is hoped that an open meeting in Haddington will follow.

## The Aims of RAGES

- To improve the rail service between Edinburgh and Dunbar with extension to Berwick upon Tweed at a later stage.
- To have East Linton and Reston stations re-opened for active use.
- To improve the level of service to North Berwick.
- To consider the implications with regard to car parking and bicycle storage at Stations between Waverley and Berwick upon Tweed.
- To keep under scrutiny the standards of passenger facilities at stations between Waverley and Berwick upon Tweed, including North Berwick, and to draw the attention of the relevant bodies to shortcomings which arise.
- To re-open the branch line from Longniddry to Haddington.
- The group, being environmentally minded, will actively strive to encourage rail travel within its geographical area.

Welcome to this issue of The Rages Rag, which we publish regularly. It is our main means of communication to our members.

Inside Issue 10:

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The editor invites contributions which should be sent to him at the address at the foot of page 4.

We now have over 210 members, after lapsed members for this year have been discounted.

Please encourage your neighbours, fellow passengers or those you know who have lapsed to join RAGES.

# East Linton open meeting

Around 85 East Linton residents attended RAGES' second open meeting recently to hear what progress RAGES has made regarding the re-opening of East Linton station.

Tom Thorburn, the chairman, thanked the committee for all their efforts in setting up this meeting and especially Colin Stewart for all his work delivering leaflets and his involvement with Dunpender Community Council where he had two questions regarding the station put on their recent questionnaire. It had been 25 months to the date since RAGES first held their meeting here.

He outlined the group's achievements in other areas to date and noted that RAGES ensured that Railtrack's Network Management Statement includes East Linton, as well as Reston and Haddington, as aspirations of their respective councils.

It is our firm belief that East Linton will re-open during the next ScotRail franchise as part of their renewal agreement. He compared the cost of East Linton as really small fish to what TransPennine were offering to retain their franchise - £200m to re-open the quicker route across the Pennines via the Woodhead tunnels. Sarah Boyack has intimated in correspondence with RAGES that the ScotRail franchise renewal would indeed be a good route to achieving our aims. With East Lothian Council and a percentage from ScotRail, the future does look promising for the station to re-open. Furthermore the Rail Passenger Committee (RPC) has as one of its main issues for Scotland exactly what we wish for East Lothian and eastern Borders.

Tom also said that RAGES enjoys good support from the RPC, East Lothian Council, councillors, MSP/MPs and community councils, but that we needed further support from the public by writing to their parliamentarians at local, Scottish and national levels. "Central government brought out their white paper to get us to leave the car and use the public transport alternative, so please provide us with that alternative." (Ed: included with this issue is a template letter for all members and their friends to use, incorporating their appropriate station.)

Tom then introduced John Denning whose talk is reported opposite.

A full question and answer session followed.

Q. How does the frequency of trains relate to revenue taken and would it not be better to press for a new line to be constructed from East Linton to Haddington to Tranent and into Edinburgh?

A. All lines require subsidy and this would apply to the present line into Edinburgh. The cost of such a new line would be prohibitive and therefore will not happen.

Q. According to the Sustran's list of priorities the re-opening of East Linton station is 17<sup>th</sup>! What chance have we got? Also, would a new station be owned by Railtrack?

A. This means we have to shout louder! Note that larger councils find it easier to put in new stations than small ones like East Lothian. The former Lothian Regional Council put in stations at Musselburgh, Wallyford, Bathgate, etc. Any new station would be assigned to Railtrack.

Q. If GNER gets the franchise, then Musselburgh would be developed into the Parkway, so would stopping at Dunbar cease? If so, might it not be easier for local trains to run to Dunbar?

A. GNER cannot drop Dunbar since under the present franchise the carrier has to provide at least 3 trains a day in each direction.

The current Virgin bid offers nothing for East Lothian, whereas GNER offers a lot more. Chris Garnett, GNER, has said that Dunbar is the "jewel in GNER's crown"

Q. Will there be provision for bicycles? Also will there be an airport link?

A. ScotRail generally permits free bike travel. If bicycle space is outstripped by demand, then pressure needs to be put on the train operating company to provide additional bike spaces. For the airport link, a spur needs to be put in from the main line. It will be expensive, but it has to come. As a short-term solution, nearby Ratho station could be re-opened.

Q. I am much in favour of the re-opening of East Linton station. What needs to be done after this meeting?

A. Join RAGES and support our campaign! Write letters to local councillors and to the MSP/MP.

Q. The last few miles on the North Berwick service are off the main line but surely a stopping service to Dunbar will cause extra congestion?

A. East Linton will only get a service if ScotRail provides it. ScotRail believes that it can run an hourly service between Edinburgh and Dunbar. Certainly modern express trains run very fast, but a slot will be identified between say Drem and Dunbar. A passing loop may in future be needed at East Linton and/or Reston along with additional track infrastructure at Dunbar. It is well known that Virgin wants to run services between Edinburgh and Newcastle, but these should not take precedence over a local service. It is also worth pointing out that a local service need not take up too much time. For example 5 stops take up only 9 minutes on the North Berwick service, i.e. the difference between the North Berwick express service and a normal all-stations stopping service.

Q. Can trains divert off at Millerhill?

A. Yes, it is planned to take a percentage of trains to the new Kinnaird Park station.

Q. Does RAGES have a good dialogue with Sarah Boyack?

A. We have corresponded with her on several occasions to good effect.

Q. I am in favour of re-opening the station but not if it means major housing developments!

A. There are no major housing developments planned for East Linton in the foreseeable future. Note that in the Borders, however, new housing developments are being encouraged in the neighbourhood of the former Waverley railway line.

Q. Give us a realistic date for the East Linton re-opening!

A. Impossible to tell but no more than 5 years!

Q. Will there be adequate pedestrian access to the station?

A. Yes. The underpass will be used for crossing to the opposite platform. In addition to the access from the station yard there will be plenty of access from the north side.

Q. Have we spoken to the local landowner re the new access roads?

A. No... but the matter is in hand! Actually each time a contact was attempted there was no one in.

The meeting finished with the Chairman thanking everyone for their interest shown by attending.

# A Station for East Linton

By John Denning - a resident and a user of public transport

East Linton has been dominated by the railway since the 1840s, when the railway line between Edinburgh and Berwick-upon-Tweed was opened. It then became one of the most important and heavily used railway lines in the country, for both passenger and freight traffic, between Edinburgh and London.

For many years East Linton residents were able to share directly in this new form of rapid transit. The station opened in 1846 and gave valuable service for the next 118 years, before it succumbed to the famous "axe" of Dr Beeching in 1964.

There was little opposition at the time to the closure. Both the town and county councils expressed their displeasure, as did one or two individuals, but few people mourned the station's passing and very few were inconvenienced by its closure.

I think that by 1964, rail travel had effectively ceased to be relevant to most residents of East Linton and the surrounding area. Few commuters travelled to Edinburgh then and those who did were more likely to go by car or bus.

It was therefore comparatively easy for British Railways to make a cast iron case for the station's closure: with few people using it and annual revenue low, the station was uneconomic.

That was then. Now, it is very apparent from the attendance at this meeting that the people of East Linton would like their station back. So, how feasible would this be?

Effectively, the former station is still there, or rather most of the buildings are, although the platforms have gone. Everyone knows where it is, because we have a constant reminder in the name of the adjacent Station Road. To the layperson, it would appear to be a comparatively simple matter to reinstate it to operational use, but unfortunately, this would not be as simple as it seems.

Since 1964 the East Coast Main Line has become a radically different railway to what it was then.

Since the Beeching Report, British Rail and various Governments have invested heavily in upgrading the railway so that it could specialise in long-distance fast trains.

The track was improved and upgraded to speed up trains, colour-light signalling was introduced and then the line was electrified with overhead wires.

Meanwhile, the pattern of services that use the line has changed with the local stopping services between Edinburgh, Dunbar and Newcastle no longer operating.

Twenty-six years ago, British Rail told John Mackintosh MP, that it would cost £60,000 to re-open it.

A number of factors would make it more expensive now and I would like to identify them and also provide some possible solutions to the problems they pose.

The former station site is now largely unsuitable, due to the track at this point having been upgraded for speeds in excess of 100 mph and the level of elevation would leave too large a gap for passengers between train and platform. It would be too expensive to recant the track and lower the line speed.

The solution would be to move the station site westward, adjacent to the park and therefore convenient to most of the residents of East Linton.

Primary access would be through the former station yard where it would be possible to provide parking for up to 100 cars. There would also be secondary pedestrian access from the north side.

Basic platforms and waiting shelter accommodation would require the overhead wires and supporting masts to be moved back to accommodate these and it may also be necessary to relocate some of the local signals to protect trains calling at the station.

So that is the problem of the station solved - just like that!

However, there is no point in having a station, if there are no trains to serve it. Unfortunately, the expresses will not stop at East Linton. There is no appropriate service to tap into. What is needed, therefore, is a new service and I would envisage this to be one from Edinburgh to Dunbar. (Ed - in the first stage.)

What favours this is that we know that GNER, who are currently obliged to call at Dunbar, would like to be relieved of its obligation to do so. We also know that ScotRail are keen to serve Dunbar and if they can initiate a service, then in my view the argument in favour of a new station at East Linton becomes irresistible.

The next problem to overcome is the one of line capacity.

Currently, the East Coast Main Line through East Lothian is used by four railway companies: GNER and Virgin provide the long-haul passenger services; ScotRail has an hourly service to and from North Berwick; and EWS carries the freight.

Due to limited slots in the timetable, the scope for additional rail services is currently small. Despite this, East Lothian needs an expansion of its rail.

ScotRail currently provides North Berwick with an hourly weekday service and has stated that it wishes to extend this to half-hourly as on Saturdays.

I would suggest that one of the services be operated to North Berwick, either non-stop or calling only at the proposed Musselburgh parkway station. On leaving North Berwick, trains would return to Drem, but then head for East Linton and Dunbar, via a new junction and chord that would allow trains to run directly on and off the North Berwick branch from the east without having to reverse.

Railtrack is proposing to put in a new passing loop at Prora, east of Drem, which will require additional signalling works and overhead line equipment. I would therefore propose that the additional junction works for through-running could be undertaken at the same time.

To provide the station at East Linton, I would envisage a cost of £1m to £1.5m.

East Lothian needs an expansion of its rail services. There is very little of East Lothian's rail infrastructure left, but there is a growing demand for the stations and services which remain. This demand will increase, because East Lothian is one of the few parts of Scotland where a significant population increase is projected. Most of these people will be working in Edinburgh and will need fast public transport to convey them to and from work.

Edinburgh already has a serious congestion problem and congestion charging and other punitive measures will restrict car commuting, leaving a train service as the only effective alternative. East Linton already has an advantage, because the railway is there, but what we need is a station and a train service. If a local train service can be reinstated to Dunbar, then the case for a new station in East Linton becomes unanswerable.

# North Berwick service news

## New Trains start on North Berwick service

Apart from the one-off visit to North Berwick of a class 318 electric unit for naming "North Berwick Flyer" last summer, Sunday 8th July saw the first trip on the line of one of the new 318 units on a driver familiarisation trip. The following day it entered passenger service on the 06.58 ex North Berwick. To begin with there will just be one 318 sharing the load on a daily basis with the old 305s and stand-in diesel units, but RAGES hopes even this one unit will make a big difference to reliability and punctuality, both of which have declined again recently as a result of train failures and cancellations.

As soon as ScotRail has approval from Strathclyde Passenger Transport to release more 318s it will deploy them onto the North Berwick line, allowing the withdrawal of the remaining 305s for scrap. In the meantime, ScotRail's ability to find substitute diesels to cover class 305 failures has also improved with the acquisition of four new diesel units.

RAGES welcomes the introduction of the 318s and hopes the rest will follow quickly.

## Have you tried the 18.37 yet?

Some readers may not be aware that after pressure from RAGES ScotRail introduced an additional early evening departure from Waverley to North Berwick at 18.37 Mondays to Fridays on an experimental basis. This train fills the gap between the 18.14 and the 19.37 and is steadily growing in popularity as people discover it. As a bonus, it is often a comfortable Turbostar diesel unit. To coin a phrase let us "use it or lose it".

## One-ticket travel scheme

RAGES is pleased to advise members of the launch of SESTRAN's unique new ONE-TICKET travel scheme giving people access to unlimited travel on both buses and trains with only one ticket.

Created by public/private bodies, the passes are designed for simplicity and ease of use. Passengers can travel on any combination of bus and train when using ONE-TICKET. No more fumbling around for change or the correct fare when boarding.

Tickets will initially be available for daily, weekly or four-weekly travel with an annual card being available later.

The ONE-TICKET scheme covers travel in Clackmannanshire, East Lothian, City of Edinburgh, Falkirk, Fife, Midlothian, Scottish Borders, Stirling and West Lothian council areas on these transport operators: Don Prentice Coaches, Eve Cars and Coaches, First Edinburgh, GNER, Lothian Buses, Perryman Coaches, Royal Mail Post Bus and ScotRail.

Full details of this much needed scheme are available on 0131 669 7278, or [www.one-ticket.co.uk](http://www.one-ticket.co.uk) if you have internet access.

## Rail Passengers Committee Meeting

RAGES members, Barrie Forrest and Tom Thorburn attended the meeting in the Marine Hotel, North Berwick on 15 May 2001.

The RPC convenor invited the Group to inform and enlighten the Committee of their aims, objectives and achievements. These have been well documented in recent Rages Rags and will not be repeated here.

Additionally RAGES monitors Dunbar station and reports to GNER any items that require attention i.e. broken manhole cover in access pavement, station exit sign hanging off.

Our work with the two local councils and the local MP/MSPs and Councillors was also described.

The Committee questioned the Group as to why we should not be attempting to have a local service between Edinburgh and Newcastle (rather than Berwick). We replied that it would make sense but the Council Convenor did not wish to see Berwick's case weakened from the point of the 'long distance' provider and that we had to take cognisance of that since he had been an asset to us in our meetings with him. The Committee also enquired as to what service frequency we would like to see at Reston - preferably hourly during the peak and two hourly off peak. On informing the Committee that we were conducting passenger counts at Dunbar, we were asked if we knew how many people travelled north to use Dunbar, i.e.

from the Reston area. We had no hard figures but knew of a number personally. The Committee then suggested to us that we should run a simple survey enquiring to which area/town/village the traveller belonged and entice them to complete and return the form with the chance of winning a bottle of whisky (we liked this idea). The Committee enquired as to the population surrounding Reston - we did not have any figures to hand but we suggested in the region of 12,000 (Ed: actually 10,000 based on 1991 census). It was further explained to the Committee that senior pupils from the two high schools in Berwickshire had expressed their plight regarding no public transport available to them to get access to Edinburgh Universities, as there is little affordable accommodation in the city.

The Group have themselves carried out surveys of both East Linton and Reston station sites. We were totally unimpressed by the East Linton section of the Scott Wilson report. This report suggested that the new station access would be via a convoluted series of narrow streets past the local school, and the car park would be on recreational ground! Reston on the other hand has a very pro-station landowner who has intimated that the station can have whatever land it requires.

This was a very productive meeting and we and other members attended the public meeting the next day.